



making a difference



ce. Good to be independent, you never know when you are going to need it.

Week 7: Feeling ill and low this week and bones are aching again. Now I am not sure I can complete 100 miles. I think gluten has got into my diet from eating out at the weekend. Had some much-needed acupuncture, felt much more energised and positive after the magic needles. Cycled most days thanks to my cycling friends, even though motivation had dropped.

Week 8: Still not feeling 100 per cent but determined to finish the challenge. I have come this far, so it would be a shame to throw the towel in. Practiced hill climbing, road interval training and tapered the mileage down. Threw in some fun social rides too. Cycling with like-minded people has really helped to build up to this challenge. Had lots of early nights, good food and stretching this week. Feeling really positive, visualising being at the finish line and how euphoric it's going to be. Bring it on.

The ride: The ride was an epic adventure – the highlight was being able to cycle through closed roads in London and through red lights. I soaked up the spirit and atmosphere of what cycling is truly about; for me, that is being outdoors, being free and connecting with people who have a passion to stay fit and healthy.

I would say it's one of the toughest cycling challenges I have done, my limits were tested and that is probably because I was not feeling 100 per cent. I struggled between 50 and 70 miles with knee pain. (Climbing Leith

Hill and Box Hill were tough too). I did think about giving up but once I had painkillers and an ice pack off the wonderful ambulance team, I knew I was going to be okay. The rest of the ride was memorable, in particular the support from the watching crowds and cycling through places I used to live and hang out in.

The finish up The Mall was incredible. I was overwhelmed with emotion and thrilled to have completed the challenge.

After the ride: I would highly recommend RideLondon 100 to anyone who wants to get fit or fitter, achieve personal goals, push themselves to their limits and raise money for a good cause. I love cycling and feel everyone should do it or at least try it. It's a wonderful way to get fit and stay healthy, with the added bonus of being at one with nature.

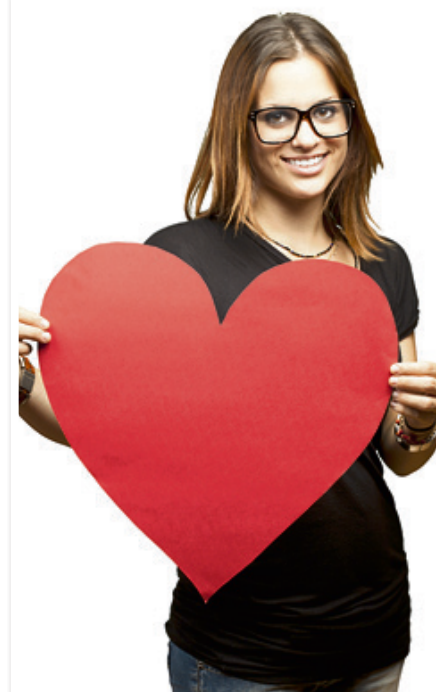
Every time I go out on my bike, it's an adventure. What new landscape will I see? How far can I go? How does this route look at sunset in summer as opposed to daytime in autumn? Which animals will I see today? Each ride is unique and usually awesome.

Cycling on the road is not as scary as it may seem and there are lots of clubs that will help build your confidence and teach you safe cycling practices. Other than personal enjoyment, more cycling would lead to a healthier population, lower carbon monoxide emissions, less noise, slower depletion of fossil fuels and less expensive investment in roads and railways. If you haven't already done it, get a bike and get out, you don't know what you are missing.



Priya Mulji

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Last girl standing (part 1)

I STARTED writing this column with the intention of it being just another piece where I would moan about being 31 and single.

Another piece where I'm wishing I could find the man of my dreams whom I will honeymoon with in Bora Bora (yes, future husband, take note of my preferred honeymoon destination), but it has turned into so much more than just a piece about being single in your 30s. That's why I decided to make it a two-parter – one column is not enough to express my feelings on how some have a 'left on the shelf' feel.

So the announcements have been made. Shopping trips to Leicester, Southall, Wembley and Birmingham have been planned. Dates have already blocked out for 2014. Next year's wedding season has well and truly blocked out a major part of my diary. Friends, family, work colleagues and the next-door neighbour have started speaking to venues, caterers, florists, DJs, dhol players and make-up artists to ensure they have the wedding of their dreams. And why shouldn't they? Girls have waited all their lives for their special day.

Men also want to settle down with the woman of their dreams, the special person who they are going to spend the rest of their lives with (hopefully, anyway), to start a family with, see their children grow up and find their own loves and create their own destiny.

The families are excited to see their son or daughter starting a new chapter of their lives and welcome the in-laws whom they entrust their daughter to. This is the lovely part of an Asian wedding.

Then comes the part that I dread about wedding – being single. Being 31 and single, weddings aren't a place I long to be at. Of course, I am ecstatic for the happy couple, don't get me wrong, but a part of me wishes it was me and I know that I'm not the only one out there. I do try and meet guys and I have been told I'm not fussy, but it can't always be me, can it? I mean who wants to go and have the old aunties asking, 'how old are you beta?', you reply, '31', your mum glaring at you wishing you would lie and say 25. When the aunties hear you're 31 they're like, 'are you married?' When you say no, the look on their faces imply that there must be something wrong with you or that you're now too old and will never find a man.

To be continued...